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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the characteristics and operation of an evaluation process -- transactional evaluation. Concentrating on the effects change has on those effecting the change, transactional evaluation stresses incorporation of both protagonists and antagonists into a change-oriented team. A copy of an evaluation questionnaire is included. (DLG)

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: What is Transactional Evaluation?

.Robert Rippey

Transactional evaluation is a developing aspect of educational accountability which does not focus exclusively on the outcomes of changed programs in schools and other institutions as they affect a target population. Instead, transactional evaluation looks at the effects of changed programs on the changers themselves - on the incumbents of the roles in the system undergoing the change. As an example, if a school system was planning the introduction of a performance contracting system, transactional evaluation would not look at improved reading scores of students, but would look at changed role relationships and latent apprehensions among those responsible for the delivery of the educational services teachers, administrators, and perhaps parents. A comparison with traditional summative and foramtive evaluations would show that 1) The target of evaluation was different: The subject of the evaluation would be the system, not the client of the services rendered by the system. 2) The variables would relate to the social, psychological, and communications aspects of the system, ~~not~~ MORE THAN the manifest objectives. 3) The information would be continuously fed back into the system. 4) The evaluator himself would be more a part of the operating system. 5) Conventional considerations of reliability, validity and objectivity would be less important than timeliness, relevance, and observable effects of the generation of evaluation information. The aims of the evaluation would not be primarily the production of new knowledge, and the attribution of causality; but the transformation of the conflict energy associated with change into productive activity, and the clarification of the roles of all persons involved in changes in program.

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It is a well known fact that changes often involve threats to the roles of incumbents in an organization. Changing programs require new skills and new behaviors. Persons holding positions feel that a considerable investment on their parts may be threatened by planned change. Therefore, conflict, foot dragging,

and subversion can often be expected. In schools, this reaction to change ranges from small talk in the teacher's lounge to active subversion in a community, or among a faculty. Although this resistance can be anticipated as a universal consequence of change, there are several optional responses open to the educator. One common yet deficient strategy of change suggests the following steps:

1. Develop a single plan carefully, and document the likelihood of its success. Restrict change to non-controversial steps which will not disturb anyone.
2. Obtain legitimation from external agencies, and published reports of success.
3. Obtain further backing from a local teacher's committee which recommends universal adoption.
4. Have arguments defending against all possible sources of criticism.
5. Introduce the plan to the entire system.
6. Either do not evaluate the program, or try to show its success.
7. Obtain publicity value from the program, but do not question too carefully whether the program is being carried out. Let teachers modify the program to suit their comfort and to reduce phone calls from parents.

This picture of inconsequential changes, highly publicized, carelessly implemented, and unevaluated is not entirely foreign to education.

On the other hand, another model is suggested by transactional evaluation. The first step would be similar to the first step in the traditional model: to carefully study a problem and to document the likelihood of success. However, several optional solutions might be entertained from the very start. As a second step, however, legitimation from external agencies, though useful, might not be so important. The third step would be quite different in that the change would

not be recommended on a universal basis, but only to those who were really enthusiastic about it. The program would begin on a small scale using its most enthusiastic and energetic supporters.

However, it is at this point that conflict begins, for if a successful new program receives praise or rewards, this will constitute a threat to those not originally involved. It is at this point where transactional evaluation becomes a useful tool in the change process.

Transactional evaluation has two main phases. The first is the phase of uncovering sources of conflict through the use of transactional instruments, using items developed by all persons involved in the change.

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

SEPTEMBER, 1971

1.	We need more courses directed towards the understanding of the inner-city child.	A 10	a 7	d 2	D
2.	My experience with the staff and Principal of school leave something to be desired. Too many inconsistencies with regards to rules, what was accepted as proper procedure for discussing problems.	A 2	a 6	d 8	D 2
3.	I enjoy classes though I find the 10 weeks too short a time to fully understand each subject	A 7	a 5	d 4	D 1
4.	Lack of experience in bi-lingual education, plus some lack of concern in a fellow team-mate, hinders the development of a "together" program at our particular school.	A 2	a 7	d 4	D 1
5.	The program as a whole suffers from domination from administration, rather than support and control from the communities in which we teach.	A 9	a 2	d 4	D 2
6.	We need more time to share teaching ideas and experiences with fellow interns. We could learn a great deal from one another, but there is no time provided for such exchange.	A 11	a 7	d	D 1

7. My experience so far has been extremely fruitful.	A	a	d	D
	5	5	6	2
8. In the community, the experiences have also been helpful and rewarding.	A	a	d	D
	7	7	4	
9. Experiences with the administration have been exciting but not always rewarding.	A	a	d	D
	4	7	1	3

Such an instrument may contain items from a single group as in the example, or it may contain items submitted by several groups such as parents, students, or teachers. Once the instrument responses have uncovered areas of substantial apprehension, the second phase of transactional evaluation can begin. This phase involves utilizing the proponents as well as the opponents of particular aspects of the program design in the development and implementation of an evaluation plan in cooperation with technical assistance from professional evaluators.

The incorporation of both protagonists and antagonists into project monitoring teams has several salubrious effects. First of all, the monitoring can include not only outcomes anticipated by proponents, but also unexpected outcomes suggested by the opponents. Secondly, role apprehensions of non-believers can be alleviated by direct action of the project, in-service training, where necessary, and clarification of policy. Obviously not all role apprehensions can be solved in this way, but many can be. A third beneficial effect of such a monitoring system is that initial opponents to a program of change are given a legitimate constructive role in the program. It is this legitimate role given to early disputants that can lead to their incorporation and conversion. An opponent to a change may have

a very legitimate objection. The change may really need modification. Initial opponents, given a legitimate, albeit sceptical role, may in fact, at times, provide just the skills or ideas necessary to keep a project off the rocks, or out of the slough of despond.

It is perhaps at the point when a program of change receives its first criticism that one can tell whether or not transactional evaluation is being used. If the response to that criticism is an answer, an explanation, or a defense, regardless of whether the defense is based on data, opinion, or the scriptures, then the answer is no. Transactional evaluation is not spoken here. If on the other hand, the response to the first criticism is another question, exploration of both substance and apprehension, and the appointment of the doubting Thomas to a monitoring committee, then we can assume that transactional evaluation is on the agenda. When a program of change looks beyond immediate outcomes of its manifest goals, and begins examining it roles, and the apprehensions of all parties to the system (including the client), when a program attempts continuously to monitor its total effects, and respond to clarifying information, then it is participating in transactional evaluation.

Transactional evaluation may be a necessary part of effective change. The agricultural, medical, and dissemination models of change have not been particulary successful when applied to schools. As House states in his evaluation of Illinois Demonstration Centers:

> If Havelock is correct, Research and Development models of change assume a passive user population which is shaped by the dissemination process itself. The facts belie this assumption. Of far greater importance are the variables controlling the would-be adopters everyday world in his home district. The individual is caught in a powerful social web that determines his behavior more than do his individual impressions gleaned at a demonstration visit. The variables that influence whether findings in this study are consistent with the "social interaction" change model which sees change as a result of the social relations network within the adopting unit.

Unfortunately, examples of transactional evaluation are not readily available. The methodology has not been perfected. Applications are few and far between. The kind of data collected may not be clean enough to appear in more formalistic journals. Persons engaged in transactional evaluation may not realize the importance of what they are doing, and therefor may not be motivated to publish.

It is fairly untraveled ground, and subject to criticism from the research purist on the right and the threatened ideologist on the left. It is a road not often taken, yet if we have educational promises to keep, we should perhaps travel at least a few miles down this road before we sleep.